



2GetHelp Wellness Center

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INSIGHTS THAT MY CLIENTS HAVE TAUGHT ME

EMPOWERING YOUR RELATIONSHIP

OR

DO WOMEN DESERVE IT ALL?

M. K. Doc Downing Ph.D., LMFT

With divorce rates running at close to 50% and second, third and fourth marriages becoming more common, the question is not only what is going wrong, but better yet, what can be done to improve the odds. Something as complicated as a relationship is not going to be fixed with one idea but each idea can be one step towards a solution.

What many women see as their purpose in life is starting to be recognized as a problem when it comes to choosing a long term mate.

Women whose marriages fail often have one common belief about their purpose as a woman: they see it as *nurturing their children and their mate*. As a result of this belief, many young women start out by looking for someone who will produce great children, someone who has DNA that will produce beautiful offspring. I often hear young women talking about a man as “a real hunk” or “a good looking stud.” He is often referred to as a jock, but now even more than before; nerds are “in” for some women who want their children to be smart.

There’s a story about the beautiful Hollywood starlet who wrote to Einstein and proposed, “We should have children together, for with my beauty and your brains, they would be the most beautiful and smartest children in the world.” Einstein wrote back, “My dear young lady, but what if they had your brains and my looks!”

Choosing a mate on DNA alone is not be the best way to create a long term relationship, considering that the divorce rate is as high as it is. What happens in many of these relationships is that after about seven years or so with the stud, she discovers that it takes more than love and beautiful children to make the marriage work. Fights start surfacing centered around money, parenting and schooling for the beautiful children. She complains, "I feel trapped and unfulfilled. There isn't enough money and I may need to go to work; you need to spend more time with the children." It is then she starts looking, often unconsciously, for alternatives.

Her solutions for this stage of marriage can range from becoming a single parent, to becoming a trophy wife, to just trading for more of the same.

For women who settle for more of the same, it is because they have come to believe, "This as good as it gets." For women with poor self-image, change can be very threatening -- even a change for the better. They believe, "Now I must accept my role in life no matter how bad it gets or how much abuse I may experience." Their excuses for staying can be endless, but most center on "I can't make it on my own with all these kids."

"More of the same" is unacceptable for other women so they find a man who has the job, skills and education to make good money so that they don't feel the need to work and can concentrate on what they perceive as the purpose of being a woman. Being a trophy wife may meet their need for financial security and allow them to nurture their family while finally feel fulfilled.

For the third group of women, being a single person in the US has become the norm rather than the exception. These women are becoming aware that they don't need a man (they need food, water, and air but they don't need a man); they want a man, but on their own terms. These are the women who have used those last seven years to finish their education and find the skills that give them independence.

All three categories of women end up settling for relationships they have been searching for, but they are left yearning for something more. This yearning is often expressed in different ways: "I just want someone to love me." Or, "I know he loves me in his own way but I just don't feel

loved; the passion has gone out of our marriage. I guess it is just time to settle and be thankful for what I got.”

Have you ever wondered why women cry at weddings? I have come to the conclusion that these women are mourning the loss of their dream. They are remembering with disappointment how they thought their marriage was going to turn out when they were marching down the aisle at their own wedding.

How can relationships be made to turn out differently?

First, I would suggest changing a woman’s culturally accepted purpose from, “To nurture and care for my mate and my children,” to, “To empower myself, my mate and my children.” This new purpose would continue through the rest of a woman’s life, even after the children have left the nest or her husband has died. A woman can always be empowering herself and others.

Second, I would suggest a woman look for a man who not only has the potential of good DNA, but also the education and/or skills to create financial security, and is a good communicator -- a man who is not afraid to share his feeling, not just his opinions, and has problem solving skills so neither partner loses when there are differences.

Men, what do you bring to the relationship? What do you have to offer that would make a woman look at you twice? True, you did not choose your DNA. But when it comes to communication skills, problem solving skills and the willingness to learn the names of your feelings and be willing to share those feelings, which is all within your power to create. You are also the one who can choose to get an education and learn the skills to find a job that you enjoy and become financially secure.

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